

The Garden in March

By Rachel Anderson, Certified Professional Horticulturist

While I was at the Flower and Garden show last month, I came across the coolest seed company. They're called the Hudson Valley Seed Library out of New York, and they specialize in organic, open pollinated, heirloom vegetable and flower seeds. While all that is very good, the thing that really stopped me in my tracks and made me pull out my wallet was the amazingly beautiful artwork that is their seed packs. Each variety is commissioned by a different artist and they are absolutely stunning! I bought seeds just for the art and not for what was in the packets. However, when I got home I browsed their catalog and decided to place a small order based on what I wanted to grow, even though I had already bought seeds from my usual favorite local growers like Uprising Organics. Needless to say, I got very excited and went a little bit over board, but I believe that there is nothing wrong with supporting a small company that is so obviously on the right track towards preserving our rich seed history. Check them out online at seedlibrary.org. Of course, Christianson's carries a fine selection of seeds including, Uprising Organics, Botanical Interest and Ed Hume seeds.

In the garden:

- Prune roses. If you haven't gotten to it already, then you probably have a lot of new growth and if your roses are in a nice sunny protected area, you might even find a couple of tiny rose buds! (Our winter has been so mild!) Don't feel too badly about pruning them off though. There will be plenty more later! It's also a good time to fertilize roses and it's easy to do it at the same time you're out there pruning.
- Cut the tops down from herbaceous perennials to make way for the new growth that is emerging from the ground.
- Divide fall blooming perennials like Asters and upright Sedums such as, 'Autumn Joy'
- It's still a good time to sow sweet peas. However, if you would really like to get a jump on things you can buy them already started at the Nursery.
- Put slug bait out around newly emerging perennials, especially delphiniums, iris, and phlox.
- Fertilize Rhododendrons, Pieris, and Camellias with a slow release fertilizer that is specifically intended for acid loving plants.
- March is the last call for bare root trees, shrubs, and berries. At the beginning of April, Christianson's will pot them up and then the prices go up, so seize the day and buy bare root in March!
- Plant spring bulbs like lilies, Gladiolus, and Dahlias! There's a great selection at the Nursery right now, but hurry because all the best ones go first.

- Pull weeds! This warm weather is giving them a jump on the season just as much as it's giving everything else a jump.
- I don't mean to be a Debbie Downer here, but during the middle of February I noticed tent caterpillars that had hatched, left their protective webbing, and were on the march. It seems awfully early for such shenanigans, but there you have it.

In the veggie garden:

- Wrap up fruit tree pruning.
- Pull mulch away from sprouting garlic and asparagus and feed with a slow release organic fertilizer. I like to use a rose and flower fertilizer on mine, which has given me very good results.
- Directly sow cool season veggies like peas, kale, cilantro, spinach, radishes, and lettuce.
- Patrol for slugs and snails. There is nothing sadder than going out to monitor newly germinated seeds only to find that they've been mowed down by ravenous creatures.
- St. Patrick's day is the traditional time for planting potatoes in our region.

I hope that as the Spring Equinox fast approaches you all have a chance to get outside and witness your garden waking up for the new season. It's such a beautiful and fleeting time in the garden and shouldn't be missed!